

# RADIO TV REPORTS,

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SUBJECT Spies and Defectors

TERENCE SMITH: Spies and defectors. Usually their tales are relegated to the realm of fictional thrillers. Lately, though, more and more of these cases are making front-page news. Is it a new phase of the superpower cold war?

Joining us with their views are former CIA Director William Colby and Vladimir Sakharov. He's a former KGB agent who defected to the United States in 1971.

Gentlemen, welcome.

It's certainly in the news. And we are confronted now with a new pattern, or at least the latest version of a new pattern, in the case of Nicholas Daniloff, the U.S. News & World Report reporter who was seized in Moscow in what appears to us to be a clear effort to arrange a trade with a Soviet employee of the U.N. who was picked up in New York.

Do you accept it as that, Mr. Sakharov, from face value?

VLADIMIR SAKHAROV: Absolutely. The Soviets had to frame somebody. Daniloff was there. And they need need [unintelligible].

SMITH: But can it be that simple, Mr. Colby? I mean because if it is that simple, where does that lead?

COLBY: Well, I think the most interesting aspect is not the seizure of Daniloff but the fact that the KGB could force it. Apparently, one of the reasons was that the lawyer in the case in New York apparently did not bring to the attention of the judge the fact that our government would have agreed to paroling Mr.

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SANTA ANA ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER (CA)  
5 September 1986

# Spying for a new life

Ex-KGB agent is a  
success in the U.S.

By Ann Imee  
The Register

**L**earning a new career is a common challenge for immigrants. The United States has a limited demand for goatherds and Sri Lankan lawyers.

A defecting KGB agent faces a similar quandary. Fomenting anti-American power plays — and foiling them, as a double agent — are not skills that draw a six-figure salary in Southern California.

But somehow, Vladimir Sakharov wasn't impressed with the CIA's job placement department when he wound up with the false identity of a German emigre in a shaky motel school on Hollywood Boulevard.

Just as he had in his teen years, when a fondness for Charlie Parker jazz tunes threatened his security rating and prospects for Soviet diplomatic training, Sakharov chose his own road.

He opted for a doctorate from the University of Southern California and an executive position with Irvine-based Ultrasystems, a firm specializing in engineering and, of all things, defense electronics.

More recently, Sakharov has taken to the life of a lecturer, to such disparate audiences as Orange County's World Trade Center Association and a national convention of hardware store suppliers.

He's happily ensconced in his new American life, complete with an American wife, a 9-year-old son and an avocation as a youth soccer coach. Early this

year, he moved from Orange County to Tucson to take a professorship at the University of Arizona.

Fifteen years after he slipped away from the watchful eyes of his fellow Soviet spies in a Kuwaiti desert, the burly 41-year-old still smokes and drinks like a Russian.

But he claims to have overcome the guilt that prompted him to title his autobiography, "High Treason."

"Just like Dostoevsky," he acknowledges with a wry smile when asked about the choice of words. "At the time, I felt guilty about my family," as he feared official retribution on his parents and estranged wife and daughter. "Actually, nothing happened to them, but I wasn't comfortable until I found out.

"I can only guess that my father knew many people — one of his good friends was on the Central Committee," the ruling body of the Soviet Union.

"About me, they probably say, 'He always did like jazz, and it's only one step from there' " to turning traitor.

Despite the joking manner, the statement is not so far from the truth. His defection was prompted by a pyramid of reasons. But Sakharov sums them up with a remarkably capitalistic attitude: "The grass was greener on the other side."

To the young Sakharov, America was "irresistible." He loved the music, the clothes, the cigarettes. And he quickly grew "sick and tired" of hiding his taste in nearly everything, for fear of jeopardizing his prospects for a diplomatic career overseas where he would have access to the Western goods he wanted.

Seventeen-year-old Vladimir found that a diplomatic career was synonymous with a job in the KGB. But that was no surprise. He was following in his father's footsteps.

After a rigorous education in the language, culture, politics and society of Arab countries, Sakharov found himself posted in the Middle East. First Yemen, then Egypt and Kuwait. It

was the late '60s. One of his tasks was encouraging Arab politicians in using their control over Western energy supplies, with an eye toward what became the Arab embargo of 1973.

His decision to spy for the Americans came through a curious need to pay his dues. "I don't think it would be right to just come here and ask for political asylum. Everyone has to work for his ticket."

Finally the strain became too much, especially as he was due for rotation back to Moscow. His CIA contact came through with an offer of a midnight helicopter ride across the desert.

But that was about the last pleasant experience Sakharov had with the CIA. Already strained by his service as a double agent, he found the tension merely mushroomed after his defection, because his debrief-

"There is no concern for the mental state of the defector. You're being drained of everything you know. I gained 80 to 90 pounds."

The experience thoroughly soured Sakharov on the CIA. And his first taste of American freedom as a student in a Hollywood hotel school wasn't much better.

"I was a total mess," he recalls. He'd lost not only his homeland and family, he'd also lost his identity, as the CIA felt a new name was crucial for his protection from KGB revenge.

But after much wrangling, the CIA did come through one more time with compensation for their one-time operative. The agency paid his tuition for a doctorate at USC. Sakharov chose to continue the academic course he started in the Soviet Union: Arab studies.

USC also gave him a thorough grounding in American life, and he wound up graduating in 1977 into his executive slot at Ultrasystems.

Though he was still using his

German identity then, Sakharov says Ultrasystems was quite aware of his background. "I think they were more fascinated with my background than my qualifications," he says today.

Ultrasystems president Phil Stevens would not even discuss whether Ultrasystems has ever had a international operation, much less whether Sakharov ever worked there.

But the former spy was obviously well-trusted by this time. Ultrasystems' Pentagon business at the time included a contract for evaluating the combat readiness of the Minuteman nuclear missile system. Sakharov later conducted seminars for the Defense Intelligence Agency.

In 1980, Sakharov chose to return to his real name, despite warnings from the CIA that he would be risking his life.

But the fears were unjustified. Soviet "journalists" — Sakharov says it with quotations in his tone of voice — came to one of his speeches once, so they obviously know where he is.

"I don't think I said anything they didn't know already."